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How to Catch a Unicorn?

Iconography and Armigerous Self-image
in the Tapestries Known as “La Dame à la Licorne”

Abstract

The tapestry-set entitled as “La dame à la licorne”, which is kept by the Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge in Paris, has been interpreted as a Five-Senses-Cycle. This reading produces problems such as the surplus of the “mysterious” sixth tapestry. Attempts to reconstruct the sequence have failed so far. By proposing a reinterpretation as a unicorn catch, a chronological order emerges which also includes the sixth piece as a part of the pictorial plot. “La Vue” actually represents ‘the banishing of the unicorn with a mirror’, an established French iconography during the 14th and 15th century. The paper discusses an illumination of the *Wharncliffe Hours* by carving out different layers of meaning in relation to the tapestries. The comparison to contemporary images and texts uncovers four keynotes. These motifs concern firstly the characteristics of the female protagonist, secondly the unicorn’s preference for music, thirdly the ideal setting for the catch and fourthly the horn’s magic power. According to this re-reading the cycle visualizes the unicorn becoming yielded to the temptations.

Introduction

On 20th September, 1483, the Dominican Felix Fabri faces a unicorn.¹ The encounter has been documented in his diary-like *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae*.² A two day's journey away from St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, the group of travellers reaches a wondrously fruitful valley. There at some distance the author beholds a strange animal. Within the group, a lively debate on the species starts. Finally Fabri identifies it. He reports that this kind of beast was extraordinarily strong and that it was hunted because of its extremely precious horn. Only virgins were able to capture it. In the end he proudly adds that the animal had remained and watched the arrivals curiously. Also when they were removing themselves again it did not try to escape.

The author verifies the unicorn scene by references to the Holy Scripture³ and to the writings of Albertus Magnus.⁴ While it is impossible for us *not* to think of the unicorn as a mythical creature, its real existence has become a matter of fact until modern ages by being proven constantly.⁵ In Fabri's text-dramaturgy the unicorn enters the scene at a paradisiacal, flourishing place in the middle of nowhere. In a similar constellation of absent presence the unicorn appears in the very well known set of tapestries kept in the Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge in Paris. It is labeled as "La dame à la licorne" and has been dated around 1500 (figs. 1–2, 4–6, 8).⁶ Each one of the six red-ground images shows a bloomy, tree-covered island with a female figure, a unicorn and a lion.

The existing scholarship on the piece has broadly promoted a fixed and singular interpretation as an allegoric Five-Senses-Cycle.⁷ The titles VERLET and SALET, accorded to the tapestries in 1960, are associated with them until today.⁸ However, there are three fundamental problems caused by this interpretation, which still remain unresolved.⁹ For decades the fact that the unicorn is central for the visual message was simply ignored. At least one of the latest publications promisingly entitled as *Les Secrets de la licorne* addresses this deficit by presenting an impressive collection of material but fails to develop a concise re-interpretation for the Cluny-set.¹⁰ On an analytical level it even falls short of the comprehensive overview and knowledge J. W. EINHORN gave in his standard work *Spiritualis Unicornis. Das Einhorn als Bedeutungsträger in Literatur und Kunst* from 1976, which is unfortunately only available in German.¹¹ As Laura Weigert points out the problems concerning understanding textile art properly, deeply root in the history of art historiography.¹² Being the product of highly collaborative processes tapestries cannot be attributed to a single author or a genius. Primarily devoted to secular subject matters the objects cause various problems of interpretation. Within

the ranking of arts, tapestries – the most prestigiously and expensive medium of medieval representation – were devaluated and marginalized as applied art.

My argument therefore addresses three key issues related to something which has to be called a miss-interpretation: Firstly, the pictorial plot is completely discordant with this reading: an iconography of the Five Senses shows – at least in the given examples¹³ – a single protagonist as the receiver of the sensual perception. By contrast, different characters experience the sensual perception in the series of Paris. While the unicorn appears in profile in “La Vue” contemplating its mirror image, in a side scene of “L’Ordorat” a monkey sniffs the flower, and in “Le Toucher” the lady and the unicorn perceive the sense of touch (figs. 6, 2, 8). Secondly, a reasonable sequence has not been established yet. None of the proposals corresponds to their presentation in the Museum.¹⁴ Attempts to come up with a medieval concept of the hierarchy of senses have failed so far.¹⁵ Thirdly, there is the problem of the sixth tapestry. The piece called “Mon seul désir” does not correlate to any of the senses (fig. 3). Therefore, it has been separated from the series as a prologue or a conclusion.¹⁶

The present article asks: Who is the protagonist and who is the recipient of the actions? By re-reading the series, the problem of order will be solved through a reconstruction of the narrative. This also includes “Mon seul désir”, which thereby will be re-inserted into the sequence.

The hunt of the unicorn – a common theme around 1500

In *Tapestry No. 5*¹⁷ the female protagonist of the series is sitting directly on the ground with a mirror in her hand (fig. 5). The lady grasps the neck of the kneeling unicorn with her left hand. The beast has put its front hooves on her lap to contemplate its mirror visage. This composition is identical to a bas-de-page of the *Wharnccliffe Hours* (fig. 7).¹⁸ The posture and gesture of both the woman and the animal, is equivalent to that of the figures in the tapestry. The facial expression of the unicorn is remarkable; the animal seems to smile while watching itself in the mirror held by the maiden, a theme which recurs again in the tapestry.

The obvious source for the symbolic meaning of the animals during Middle Ages was the *Physiologus*.¹⁹ This educational text exemplified Christian concepts by describing the characteristics of animals.²⁰ Each chapter contains a description of the animal being and an allegoresis based on it.²¹ Every passage starts with the set phrase “Physiologus dicit”²². In the unicorn-chapter the sentence “Sic est dominus noster Iesus Christus spiritalis unicornis”²³ leads into the interpretation in terms of salvific history. Thereby Christ is equated with the unicorn while the virgin refers typologically to Mary.²⁴

Illustrations of the virgin with the unicorn were used in sacred and secular context alike.²⁵ Particularly this specific iconography, which I would like to call the ‘banishing of the unicorn with a mirror’, culminates in 14th century especially in France.²⁶ It can appear on its own and combined with a chasing or killing scene as well.

In the light of the considerable stock of medieval unicorn-images, one could argue that their visual figuration is quite dynamic. The question is, which standard of knowledge existed concerning unicorns around 1500? Which circumstances guarantee a successful catch? And why is the unicorn in such high demand in this period? By pointing out four incantations, I would like to propose a reinterpretation of the six Parisian tapestries by reconstructing the narrative of a triumphant unicorn hunt.

1st magic formula: *une juine pucele, bien atornée, jovene et bele*

While the description of the woman in the early Latin *Physiologi* solely concerns her chastity, her appearance is elaborated upon with greater specificity in the medieval texts. The cardinal, chronicler and early encyclopaedist Jaques de Vitry (1160/70-1240) describes an adorned virgin.²⁷ In vernacular bestiaries, Pierre de Beauvais depicts her as beautiful and Gervaise characterizes her to be well adorned.²⁸ The virgin of the *Livre des Secrez de la Nature* is pictured as a beautiful girl.²⁹

The motif of adornment continues throughout the whole Cluny set. All the garments are made from precious brocades, velvets and damasked silks. In each one of the tapestries, the lady wears a jewelry set of a collier and a metallic belt in different variations. In this context, the attention has to be focused on her headdress: It develops from a schapel (a kind of metal floral wreath) and a transparent veil in *Tapestry No. 1* to a coif in *No. 2*, a turban with frontal feather in *No. 3* and from a complex hairstyle with vertically raised frontal braid in *No. 4 and 5* to a golden one-edged head piece, which is best described as a unicorn-crown, in *No. 6*.

Tapestry No. 1 can be understood as some kind of profane epiphany that introduces the protagonist in a courteous and noble manner (fig. 1). It should be noted that the plot of the series is phrased lyrically, rather than epically. In any case, there is an action developing which starts in *Tapestry No. 2* (fig. 2). Here for the first time the act of adornment is explicitly articulated. The female protagonist binds flowers into a wreath. In context of a unicorn hunt this activity must be allocated to its preparatory tasks, as a beautifully adorned virgin is required by the texts. Related to this, I would like to point on a Florentine engraving, showing a lady wearing a wreath of blossoms and unicorn (fig. 3). A temporal moment which supports this

chronological proposal in detail becomes manifest in the roses, which are growing on the espalier in *No. 1*. The cut blossoms are kept in a basket in *No. 2*.

The issue of adornment as a ceremonial action is widely broached and commemorated in *Tapestry No. 3* (fig. 4). Here the lady is shown taking some precious jewels with a noble gesture from an open chest handed by her maid. It is part of the preparation for the unicorn catch, but intensified in comparison to *No. 2*. The motto written in golden letters “A MON SEUL DESIR: V” signifies the further designation. It represents the principal of the set as the initiator of the unicorn catch.



Fig. 1: *Tapestry No. 1*, (“Le Gout”; Wool/Silk, 375 x 460 cm, 1484–1500, France/Netherlands), Paris Musée de Cluny



Fig. 2: *Tapestry No. 2, ("L'Ordorat"; Wool/Silk, 367 x 322 cm, 1484–1500, France/Netherlands), Paris Musée de Cluny*



Fig. 3: *Marietta* (Engraving, 1465–80, Florence)
Note the empty shields!



Fig. 4: *Tapestry No. 3*, ("Mon seul désir"; Wool/Silk, 378 x 466 cm, 1484–1500, France/Netherlands),
Paris, Musée de Cluny

2nd magic formula: *the monoceros loves the joy very much*

While the first three tapestries illustrate the preconditions of the upcoming catch, the virgin now starts to lure the unicorn.

“There is an animal, which is called *monoceros*. In that area there is a huge lake. Just before the animals assemble there, the snake has arrived and has thrown its venom into the water. When the animals notice the poison, they do not risk drinking, but wait for the *monoceros*. It arrives and immediately goes into the lake, makes the sign of a cross with its horn and hence let vanish the power of the poison. His second nature: The animal, I am speaking of the *monoceros*, loves the joy very much. Well, what are those people doing who hunt it? They take drums, trumpets, strings and what [else] people come up with, move to the place where the animal is, and perform a dance by playing the trumpets and whatever else they have and shout loudly while dancing. They put a single woman somewhere next to a tree close to it [the unicorn]. They adorn her and give her a rope, which is fixed on a tree. When the *monoceros* hears the noise it comes closer, watches and listens to what they are doing, but does not risk to approach them. However, when it sees the woman resting [there] alone, it comes close and rubs against her knees. While the woman becalms it, it falls asleep. Then she enchains it with the rope, takes it away and transfers it. But the *monoceros* awakes and cannot walk anymore, because it is kept down by the rope. Being very oppressed it drops its horn and runs away. Then the huntsmen take the horn as it is useful as a remedy for the snake.”³⁰

This text was written in Greek in the 14th century. It illustrates the unicorn’s preference for music and dance. Its visual equivalent can be found in the *bas-de-page* of the *Wharncliffe Hours*: On the right there is a gleeman sitting in the tree playing the bagpipe (fig. 7). Two couples are dancing beneath him.

According to J. W. EINHORN this preference for music is rooted in the C-Version of *Physiologus*:³¹ There it is written “Quando tamen tripudiando discurrit, sic modo comprehenditur”³² (“But when it prances back and forth, it can be captured in this manner”).

The mannered posture and punchy facial expression of the unicorn in *Tapestry No. 4* (fig. 5) is striking. It is the scene in which the lady plays the portative organ assisted by her maiden. While the bodies of the animals are turned towards the center of the image in *Nos. 1–3*, they are inverted in this piece. The body of the unicorn has been cut, his back partly disappears behind the major group of humans. The forelegs are lifted from the ground. Its head is turned back into the direction of sound. The ears are lifted, its visage depicts a strong arousal, reminiscent of medieval drolleries. It can be stated that the heraldic representation binding for the first three pieces has been given up in favor of expression. The intention is to show the reaction

of the unicorn to the sound of music according to the text examples given above in order to align the formal, pictorial attributes with those in the story.



Fig. 5: *Tapestry No. 4, ("L'Ouïe"; Wool/Silk, 370 x 290 cm, 1484–1500, France/Netherlands), Paris, Musée de Cluny*

3rd magic formula: *in deserto iuxta arborem*

Such as in the *Evagatorium in Sanctae Terrae*, mentioned above, the hunting of the unicorn generally takes place in a deserted area. This was already elaborated in the Version B of *Physiologus* (around 400 AD), written in Latin, which served as the model for the vernacular bestiaries.³³ Here, the woman is left alone in the forest.³⁴ According to the oldest French adaption 1121 by Philippe de Thaon the unicorn catch takes place in the woods.³⁵ In his bestiary, dated in the beginning of 13th century, the author, Gervaise, has the unicorn graze in an abandoned mountainous landscape.³⁶ There the virgin is placed. After coming close to her, the unicorn falls asleep and is enchained by her. The Hildesheim edition of the legend by *Priest John*, a retranslation of the French adaption back into Latin, speaks of a deserted area with a tree where the unicorn becomes tame and kneels down.³⁷ By lying down its head onto the lady's lap, it falls asleep. Then the virgin puts the animal in chains and leads it as she pleases.

J. W. EINHORN has indexed a multiplicity of images, showing the hunt for the unicorn in a forest-like setting.³⁸ His findings show that the tree as a sort of leitmotif can be derived from the texts. This applies at least for the both topics discussed in this paper, which have to be regarded separately: 'The Hunt for the Unicorn', in which the unicorn is killed and 'The Capture of the Unicorn', in which it stays alive.

The tree-covered island, which is referenced six times, is a chief characteristic of the Paris-cycle. It is all the more surprising that only in *Tapestry No. 5* the binding scheme of four trees is given up in favor of an arrangement of oak trees and thorn apples in pairs (fig. 6). According to my thesis, this can be understood as local shift from civilization to wilderness. This reading is supported by the fact that in comparison to *Nos. 1–4*, the inventory is missing in *Tapestry No. 5*: The other pictures are furnished by movable pieces of the scenery such as the rose trellis, the pavilion and several stools. While the level has been completely flat before it is slightly vaulted here. This indicates that *No. 5* is an attempt to visualize a very specific environment in accordance with written sources.

The unicorn leaves the role as a heraldic supporter in order to become a fully equal protagonist of the pictorial plot in *Tapestry No. 5*. Formally, we can observe the strongest break within the series here. The lady's female assistant figure has disappeared. According to the traditional texts, the virgin is exposed to the unicorn alone. Moreover, this allows one to identify the picture based on the primary iconography. The special picture format could provide clues as to where it might have been hung in a domestic setting, such as a chimney.



Fig. 6: *Tapestry No. 5, ("La Vue"; Wool/Silk, 310 x 330 cm, 1484–1500, France/Netherlands), Paris Musée de Cluny*

4th magic formula: Touch

The antidotal effect attributed to the horn of the unicorn has already been mentioned here. The use of unicorn (or narwhale, as we know today) relics can be traced back to the 11th century.³⁹ In courtly context, the precious item of natural produce was in great demand as an antidote to deadly poisons. Written sources prove the use of unicorn for instance as part of the table culture at the Burgundian court under the regency of Charles the Bold (1467–1477).⁴⁰ Within the field of pharmacy, unicorn powder became available to the solvent public. Tenfold the value of gold had to be paid for the substance in 1536 in Paris.⁴¹

The 14th-century-version of the *Physiologus*, cited above, is some early evidence for the unicorn's ability to decontaminate water. The idea of the unicorn as a remedy was popularized from the 15th to the 17th century through cultural practices, texts, or through the specific iconography showing the unicorn by the waterside.⁴² The earliest pictorial records can be found around 1450.⁴³

In the main miniature of the discussed *Wharncliffe Hours* "Saint John with the poisoned cup" appears (fig. 7). Standing before Aristodamus, he is forced to drink the poisoned wine, which he blesses. The deadly poison, which has already evolved its fatal effect on the two criminals lying on the ground, escapes in the shape of the snake. Below, the specific iconography of the unicorn by the water is set aside in favor of showing the unicorn's capture. However, it actually alludes to water by showing the fountain and the stream.⁴⁴ It reflects on the topic of the main miniature typologically. It has to be assumed that contemporaries could follow the analogy of the apotropaic unicorn and Saint John's poison miracle.

In his *Bonum universale de apibus*, finished in 1263, Thomas of Cantimpré renders the capture of the unicorn as an appropriate example for chastity.⁴⁵ "Cuius cornu, ut vidimus in Brugensi ecclesia Flandriae septem pedum in longitudine, virgo manibus apprehenso, flexibilem reddit, et animis moderatum."⁴⁶

The final scene is *Tapestry No. 6* (fig. 8). Here, the order of the four-trees-pattern is restored again. The virgin leads the unicorn at his horn. The fabulous beast seems to be tamed and is subordinated to the lady in seize. The animals of the Mille-Fleur-background are noticeable for being axially aligned and in chains. The idea of the virgin leading the unicorn is the core of the *Physiological* literature. The crowned female figure appears increased in proportion to all the other images. She carries the banners herself and marks the central line of this composition. While she appears to be withdrawn and completely immersed into her tasks in Nos. 1–5, now her eyes are wide open and her gaze is directed into the distance, out of the picture frame.



Fig. 7: Maître François (?), *Wharncliffe Hours*: main miniature: *Saint John with the poisoned cup*,
Basde-Page: banishing the unicorn with a mirror (1470/80s, France)
Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, MS Felton 1 (1072/3) fol. 7^r



Fig. 8: *Tapestry No. 6, ("Le Toucher"; Wool/Silk, 372 x 358 cm, 1484–1500, France/Netherlands), Paris, Musée de Cluny*

Patronage – Function – Heraldry

Of great visual impact are the armorial bearings. Due to the high number of crescents even some oriental provenance was hypothesized in the 19th century.⁴⁷ Actually, it is the coat of arms of the Le Viste-family,⁴⁸ gules, a bend azure charged with three crescents argent. Most probably it was Jean IV Le Viste (about 1431–1500), scion of a bourgeois family of lawyers from Lyon,⁴⁹ who commissioned the set.⁵⁰ In 1464, he is mentioned as “conseiller lai au Parlement”⁵¹ in Paris. After having held several royal offices Jean is appointed as President of the royal court, one of the highest positions of the kingdom, under King Charles VIII of France in 1489.⁵² According to FEDOU’s analysis, the Le Vistes are representative for the so-called *Classe de la Robe*, families who aspired to be ennobled.⁵³ By orientating towards courtly culture and adopting it, those parvenus legitimized their position. To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan’s famous dictum,⁵⁴ choosing the medium of tapestry priory reserved to courtly representation due to their high costs being a message itself.⁵⁵ In the following, it will be explained how the dynastic signs are presented and how this works together with the narrative.

In the *Tapestries Nos. 1 and 2* the crests are displayed four times. This representation becomes minimized from a triple in *No. 3*, via a duad in *No. 4* to a single in *No. 5*. In the latter only the lion remains a heraldic supporter. Whilst reducing the extensive armorial show, the story strives to its climax, which is evidently the capture, represented in *Tapestry No. 5*. After the catch the emblematic setting has changed: The magical horn is subordinated to the conducting lady, both together are subordinated to the Le Viste’s banners. The precious magical horn and the family’s sign are conjunct through the contact embodied by the female key figure. Having framed the scene before, the armorial bearings are part of the main action now. This revaluation is the final result of the successful capture.

This explicit desirousness directed to the unicorn’s horn can be compared to the tapestry called “The Unicorn is Killed and Brought to the Castle” of the Metropolitan Museum in New York (fig. 9).⁵⁶ Within the crowd the key scene is embedded at the center of the composition into a synchronously constructed visual narrative, which is developed semi-circularly. One of the returning huntsmen holds the horn of the slain unicorn, which is additionally fixed by an oak branch. He points to the main characters, a noble couple followed by his entourage, with the right hand. The lady’s gesture, opening the palm of her left hand, signifies that she is about to receive the horn. With her right hand she is touching her rosary, which shows her religiousness. The purpose of the hunt is handing the horn of the unicorn over to the sovereign for the collective good of the people, represented by the crowd and the townscape.⁵⁷

The term “pictorial intelligence”⁵⁸ seems to illustrate the great challenge in how to best blend the heraldic and the narrative aspect. Formally, the set realizes first of all the heraldic color concept, by putting the island in blue on the red ground. Apart from *Tapestry No. 5*, which reverts to a common iconography, it lacks – as far as we know – comparable concepts for monumental cycles of the unicorn capture. Therefore, the creators had to invent the visual narrative by using the knowledge available from the textual tradition only. As social climbers the Le Vistes mangle a long dynastic tradition, which had to be compensated. By adopting and incorporating the unicorn, a sign which was heavily loaded with sacred and secular meaning, the ordering family tries to aggrandize itself.



Fig. 9: The Unicorn Tapestries, The Unicorn is killed and brought to the Castle (Tapestry, 1496–1505, Southern Netherlands) New York Metropolitan Museum

Table of figures

1. Maria Lanckorónska, Wandteppiche für eine Fürstin, Frankfurt/M. 1965.
2. Ibid.
3. Margaret B. Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*, New York 1983, p. 55.
4. Maria Lanckorónska, Wandteppiche für eine Fürstin, Frankfurt/M. 1965.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Bernard J. Muir (ed.), *Reading Texts and Images Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Art and Patronage in honour of Margaret M. Manion*, Exeter 2002, p. 212.
8. Maria Lanckorónska, Wandteppiche für eine Fürstin, Frankfurt/M. 1965.
9. Metropolitan Museum of Art, URL:
<http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/cl/original/DP118989.jpg> (last visit: Sept. 3 2016)

¹ I am deeply grateful for the English proofreading, which was done by Nancy Demerdash and Veit Harzdorf.

² Felix Fabri, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti Peregrinationem* (Cod. 19555.1.2; II, 7, fol. 39 B-40 A), 1485–88, (Municipal Library of Ulm). Quoted after: Jean Meyers, «Le 'rhinoceros' de Frère Félix Fabri», in: *Rursus*, 2008, No. 3, <http://rursus.revues.org/221>, (last visited: 20.6.2010).

³ Here Fabri exegetically refers to: Book of Numbers 23, 22 (Vulgate): “Deus eduxit eum de Aegypto cuius fortitudo similis est rinocerotis”, and Book of Job 39, 9–11 (Vulgate): “Numquid volet rinoceros servire tibi aut morabitur ad praesepe tuum, numquid alligabis rinocerota ad arandum loro tuo aut confringet glebas vallium post te, numquid fiduciam habebis in magna fortitudine eius et derelinques ei labores tuos.” Quoted after: Meyers, (as note 2). For the exegetical tradition on the unicorn see: Jürgen Werinhard Einhorn, *Spiritualis Unicornis. Das Einhorn als Bedeutungsträger in Literatur und Kunst*, Munich 1976, pp. 42–45.

⁴ Meyers, (as note 2).

⁵ Still in 1838, the “Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste” confirms the existence of the unicorn in Africa: Jochen Hörisch, *Das Tier, das es nicht gibt. Eine Text- und Bildcollage über das Einhorn*, Munich 2005, p. 209.

⁶ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, *The Lady and the Unicorn [La dame à la licorne]*, Paris 1989, p. 80.

⁷ First assumed by Albert Franck Kendrick, «Quelques remarques sur la Dame à la licorne du Musée Cluny (allégorie des cinq sens?)», in: *Actes du Congrès d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris 1921, 1924*, vol. 3, pp. 662–666. This interpretation was emphasized recently by Michel Pastoureau and Elisabeth Delahaye, *Les secrets de la licorne*, Paris 2013, pp. 84–109.

⁸ Pierre Verlet and Francis Salet, *La dame à la licorne*, Paris 1960.

⁹ Other proposals were contributed by: Kristina E. Gourelay, «La dame à la licorne. A reinterpretation», in: *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1997, No. 80, pp. 237–254; Michele Monsour, «The Lady with the unicorn», in: *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1999, 134, pp. 237–254 and Marie-Élisabeth Bruel, «Les tapisseries des 'La dame à la licorne', une représentation des vertus allégoriques du Roman de la Rose», in: *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 2000, No. 136, pp. 215–232.

¹⁰ Michel Pastoureau, Elisabeth Delahaye, *Les secrets de la licorne*, Paris 2013.

¹¹ Cf. Note 3.

¹² Laura Weigert, «The Art of Tapestry: Neither Minor nor Decorative», in: Colum Hourihane (ed.), *From Minor to Major*, Princeton 2012, pp. 102–121.

¹³ Carl Nordenfalk, «Les cinq sens dans l'art du Moyen Âge», in: *Revue de l'Art*, 1976, No. 34, pp. 17–28; Carl Nordenfalk, «The Five Senses in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art», in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 1985, No. 48, pp. 1–22; Sophie Schneeberg-Perelmann, «La Dame à la Licorne été tissée à Bruxelles», in: *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1967, No. 70, pp. 253–278.

¹⁴ After World War II the masterpiece had been presented in a rotunda, which created a rather surreal atmosphere. In 2013 the suggestive exhibition architecture was replaced by a rectangular hall which seems to meet

the original intention better that has to be imagined as textile furniture of a specific interior space. See: Elisabeth Delahaye-Tabouret, «Une nouvelle sale pour La Dame à la Licorne», in: *La Revue des Musées de France*, 2014, No. 64, pp. 7–10.

¹⁵ According to a medieval hierarchy of senses a chronological order was proposed by: Antoine Glaenzer, «La Tenture de la Dame à la Licorne, du Bestiaires d'Amours à l'Ordre des Tapisseries», in: *Micrologus. Natura, scienze e società medievali*, 2002, No. 10, pp. 401–428.

¹⁶ First of all, the problem was exposed by Schneeberg-Perelmann, (as note 10), pp. 253–278. While she focuses on the idea of a frontispiece, Erlande-Brandenburg recognizes the 6th tapestry as conclusion of the series: Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, «La tenture de la Dame à la licorne», in: *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 1977, pp. 165–179. The latter assumption was followed by: Jean-Pierre Jourdan, «Le sixième sens et la Théologie de l'Amour. Essai sur l'iconographie des tapisseries à sujets amoureux à la fin de Moyen-Âge», in: *Journal des Savants*, 1996, pp. 137–153; Jean Boudet, «'La dame à la licorne' et ses sources médiévales d'inspiration», in: *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 1999 (2002), pp. 61–78. As a representation of the sense of touch “Mon seul desir” was interpreted by: Helmut Nickel, «About the sequence of the tapestries in the „Hunt of the unicorn“ and the „Lady with the unicorn“», in: *The Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 1982, vol. 17, pp. 9–14: The author suggests an order according to a numerical code represented by the armorial bearings.

¹⁷ Here I will renounce to use the titles but a numbering system.

¹⁸ Margaret Manion, *Das Wharnclyffe Stundenbuch. Ein bebildertes Gebetbuch des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts aus der Sammlung der National Gallery of Victoria Australien*, Kassel 1981, p. 8.

¹⁹ The original Greek text dates from 200 AD, therefore see: Einhorn, (as note 3), pp. 50–53. The Greek manuscripts were assigned to several adaptations by: Francesco Sbordone (ed.), *Physiologus*, Milan 1936. For an overview on the medieval adaptations, see: Florence Macculloch, *Medieval latin and French Bestiaries*, Chapel Hill 1960, pp. 25–40. For a synopsis of the unicorn-chapters of versions C, Y, B, and *Dicta Chysostomi*, see: Einhorn, (as note 3), Appendix.

²⁰ Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and their use*, London 1998, p. 204.

²¹ Einhorn, (as note 3), pp. 53–56.

²² Ibid. p. 53.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Relating to that, the iconography showing the annunciation as mystic-allegorical hunt of the unicorn has to be pointed out. See: Ibid. pp. 194–215.

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 174–194.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Einhorn, (as note 3), p. 141.

²⁸ Pierre writes “bel et bien parée”, ibid. and Gervaise writes “une juine pucele, bien atornée, jovene et bele”, see: Paul Meyer, «Le Bestiaire de Gervaise», in: *Romania. Recueil trimestriel consacré à l'étude des langues et des littératures romanes*, 1872, No. 1, p. 429.

²⁹ The author writes: “une belle pucele”, see: Louis Delatte (ed.), *Textes Latins et Vieux Français relatifs aux Cyranides*, Paris 1942, p. 341.

³⁰ *Physiologus, cod. gr. 1140 fol. 91v-97v*, Early 14th c., (Bibliothèque Nationale). *Physiologus*-Manuscript. Translated after J. W. Einhorn's translation into German: Ibid. p. 55. See also: Sbordone (ed.), (as note 15), p. 321.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 54–55. The C-Version is a Graeco-Italian manuscript of the 9th c. (Cod. 318, Burgerbibliothek Bern), see note 15.

³² Ibid. p. 54: J. W. Einhorn translates “tripudiando” as “dancing step”.

³³ Ibid. pp. 50–53.

³⁴ “In siluam solam”, ibid. p. 56.

³⁵ “En la forest”, see: Emmanuel Walberg (ed.), *Le Bestiaire de Phillippe de Thaün. Texte Critique*, Paris, 1900, p. 15. For the Bestiary of Philipp de Thaon see: Macculloch, (as note 15), pp. 47–54.

³⁶ Einhorn, (as note 3), p. 141.

³⁷ “In deserto iuxta arborem”, ibid. p. 142.

³⁸ Ibid. pp. 174–194.

- ³⁹ Ibid. p. 244. See also: Guido Schöneberger, «Narwal-Einhorn. Studien über einen seltenen Werkstoff», in: *Städel-Jahrbuch*, 1935/36, No. 9, pp. 167–247.
- ⁴⁰ Victor Gay, *Glossaire du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, 2 vols., vol. 2, Paris 1928, pp. 77–78.
- ⁴¹ Louis Lewin, *Gifte in der Weltgeschichte*, Vienna 2007, p. 61. Hence one pound of gold was worth 148 Écus, but one pound of Corne de licorne was worth 1536 Écus.
- ⁴² Carl Cohn, *Zur literarischen Geschichte des Einhorns*, Berlin 1896, p. 10.
- ⁴³ Einhorn, (as note 3), pp. 243, 300–301.
- ⁴⁴ Here I would like to point to the tapestry kept in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, called “The Unicorn at the Fountain”: The piece shows the water decontamination scene. The unicorn puts its horn into a stream. The centrally placed huge fountain is very similar to that of the *Wharnccliffe Hours*: Adolfo Salvatore Cavallo, *The Unicorn Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York 1998, pp. 70–74.
- ⁴⁵ Einhorn, (as note 3), p. 146.
- ⁴⁶ Georg Colvener (ed.), *Bonum universale de Apibus*, Douai 1627, p. 312: “When the virgin took its horn – as we have seen in the church of Bruges in Flanders [it is] seven feet long – with her hands, [the animal] became cuddly and of moderate attitude”. Most likely the author relates to the Church of Our Lady.
- ⁴⁷ Fabienne Joubert, «La tenture de la Dame à la Licorne», in: Fabienne Joubert (ed.), *La Tapisserie médiévale au Musée de Cluny* Paris, 2002, pp. 66–69.
- ⁴⁸ First of all identified by: Georges Callier, «Vente des tapisseries de Boussac», in: *Bulletin Monumental*, 1882, No. 48, pp. 567–568, cited after: Monsour, (as note 9), p. 238.
- ⁴⁹ René Fédou, *Les hommes du loi lyonnais à la fin du Moyen Âge. Étude sur les origines de la classe de robe*, Paris 1964, pp. 341–350.
- ⁵⁰ First proposed by: Schneeberg-Perelmann, (as note 10), p. 268. Followed by: Erlande-Brandenburg, (as note 12), p. 165–179; Geneviève Souchal, «Messeigneurs Les Vistes et la 'Dame à la Licorne'», in: *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 1983, No. 141, p. 209–267 and Jean-Bernard Vaivre, «Messire Jehan Le Viste, chevalier, seigneur d'Arcy et sa tenture au lion et à la licorne», in: *Bulletin Monumental*, 1984, No. 142, p. 397–434. The representation of the female figure has provoked the hypothesis to explain the set as a wedding gift: As such an occasion for the commission the marriage of Claude Le Viste and Jean de Chabannes (1509/13) was suggested by: HeNoy Martin, «La dame à la licorne», in: *Memoires de la Société des antiquaires de France*, 1924–27, No. 77, pp. 137–168. The marriage of Antoine Le Viste, a nephew of Jean IV., and Jaqueline Raguier shortly before 1500 was proposed by: Nordenfalk, (as note 10), pp. 17–28. Antoine Le Viste as commissioner was recently recommended again by Carmen Decu Tecodorescu, «La tenture de la Dame à la Licorne. Nouvelle Lecture des Armoiries», in: *Bulletin Monumental*, 2010, 168, No. 4, pp. 355–367.
- ⁵¹ Souchal, (as note 54), pp. 224–227.
- ⁵² Fédou, (as note 53), p. 347.
- ⁵³ Gisela Naegele, «Im Dienst von König und Königreich? Französische 'officiers' im Spätmittelalter», in: Rainer C. Schwinges, Christian Hesse and Peter Moraw (ed.), *Europa im späten Mittelalter. Politik - Gesellschaft - Kultur*, Munich et al., 2006, pp. 313–338.
- ⁵⁴ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, New York 1964.
- ⁵⁵ Barbara Welzel, «Sichtbare Herrschaft - Paradigmen höfischer Kunst», in: Cordula Nolte, Karl-Heinz Spiess and Gunnar Werlich (eds.), *Principes. Dynastien und Höfe im späten Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 87–106. Birgit Franke, «Tapisserie - 'portable grandeur' und Medium der Erzählkunst», in: Birgit Franke and Barbara Welzel (eds.), *Die Kunst der burgundischen Niederlande. Eine Einführung*, Berlin 1997, pp. 121–139.
- ⁵⁶ Cf. Cavallo, (as note 47), pp. 29, 30, 74–75.
- ⁵⁷ The decontamination-scene is also depicted within the cycle.
- ⁵⁸ Michael Baxandall, *Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence (with Svetlana Alpers)*, Yale 1994.